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SUBJECT: JAMAICA LOOKS TO THE EAST

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Summary

11. (SBU) Jamaica's relationship with China has continued to blossom after Prime Minister (PM) Bruce Golding led a delegation to Beijing from January 30 to February 6 (Reftel A). The delegation, which also included three government ministers as well as several public sector officials, discussed a number of bilateral issues, including financial assistance and investment projects. The trip was at the invitation of the Government of China (GOC) and follows a visit to Jamaica by GOC Vice President Xi Jinping in 2009. Golding's trip also follows closely on the heels of a visit to China by the Opposition Peoples' National Party (PNP) in late 2009. Both countries have signed agreements valued at more than USD 500 million for infrastructure projects. This marks an intensification of the relationship, which has seen the GOC provide Jamaica with a number of grants and concessionary loans, and signals a continuing reorientation of the GOJ's foreign policy under the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) administration. Nevertheless, Post considers the GOJ's overtures toward China and Venezuela to be more pragmatic than ideological in nature. End Summary.

Golding Leads High Level Delegation

12. (SBU) Jamaica's relationship with China has started to flourish with the PM leading his first delegation to Beijing. The trip, which ran from January 30 to February 6, was at the invitation of the GOC and followed a visit to Jamaica by GOC Vice President Xi Jinping in 2009. The Jamaican delegation included: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Kenneth Baugh; Minister of Transport and Works Michael Henry; Minister of Investment and Commerce Karl Samuda; as well as several public sector officials.

13. (SBU) During his visit, Golding paid a courtesy call on GOC President Hu Jintao and held meetings with Vice President Xi Jinping and Premier Wen Jiabao as well as the Chairman of the China National Development Bank and the President of the Export-Import Bank of China. Golding and his team also attended a Chinese-Jamaican Economic and Investment forum and held talks with the President of the Chinese Harbour Engineering Company, Sun Ziyu.

Chinese Vows to Deepen Cooperation

14. (SBU) During his meeting with Golding, President Hu expressed his desire to enhance political dialogue, strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation, and jointly safeguard the interests of developing countries. Describing Jamaica as one of China's most important trading partners in the Caribbean, Hu said both countries had made remarkable achievements in boosting exchanges and cooperation in various areas. Xi, who visited Jamaica in February 2009, said the GOC would continue to encourage quality enterprises to invest in Jamaica. Wen, in pledging continued support, said

both countries should expand cooperation in infrastructure, mining, and tourism. "As the international financial crisis has posed a severe impact on China and the Caribbean states, we should help each other, enhance cooperation, and jointly cope with challenges so as to consistently boost our friendly ties," Wen continued.

15. (SBU) Vowing to enhance coordination on international affairs to safeguard the interests of developing countries, Wen said he would strengthen contacts with small-island states in providing funding, technology exchange, and support for capacity building. He also said China remained ready to support additional cultural, educational and sports exchanges with Jamaica. Wen also witnessed the signing of a USD 500 million pact on trade and economic cooperation, infrastructure, and social development. In addition to repairing and raising the vulnerable Palisadoes road that connects Kingston with the Norman Manley International Airport, the funds will be used to construct houses and a Chinese garden at Jamaica's Hope Botanical Gardens.

Golding Lauds China

16. (SBU) Golding told Hu that his government and people placed great importance on relations with China. He reiterated Jamaica's decision to stick to its one-China policy as well as to respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Golding also expressed gratitude for China's aid to Jamaica over the years, especially since the advent of the global financial crisis. During his meeting with Xi, Golding spoke highly of the relationship, noting that the two states are not only good partners but also good friends. Golding also hailed Jamaica-China exchanges and cooperation in the fields of politics, economics, and humanitarian concerns. China's prompt humanitarian aid to Haiti after the devastating earthquake last month spotlighted the friendship between the people of China and the Caribbean, he continued. He also highlighted China's responsible attitude in tackling climate change.

Sells Jamaica as Investment Destination

¶7. (SBU) At a luncheon of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Golding told potential investors that Jamaica wanted to establish greater investment links with China. He said the primary focus of his visit to China was to move the spirit of cooperation to a new and exciting dimension and to build on the foundation laid since diplomatic relations were established in ¶1972. "We believe that Jamaica offers China tremendous opportunities in terms of its global reach and the penetration you are seeking throughout the world. Jamaica is positioned one-and-a-half hours by air from North America and even less to Central America, within a region that has a population of over 700 million people. We see Jamaica as a strategic location that can enhance investments from China seeking to address the growing demands in this particular part of the world," Golding continued. Golding closed by making it clear that his aim was to make Jamaica an investment destination.

Analysis

¶8. (SBU) Golding's recent visit to China signals a continuing reorientation in the foreign policy of the GOJ. With the JLP apparently dissatisfied with what it perceives to have been a lack of attention from the U.S., Golding has increasingly been framing his foreign policy around organizations of developing countries such as the G77 and the Nonaligned Movement, and has sought to develop closer ties with Cuba, China and to a lesser extent Venezuela. This is a marked difference from the 1980s, when the JLP was closely allied with the U.S. during the Cold War (Reftel A). Nevertheless, while the GOJ under the JLP has proven quite willing to accept aid and investment from China, Cuba, and Venezuela, the Golding administration has made it quite clear that they have done so out of economic necessity and not due to any ideological sympathies. Golding also has embraced Canada and the European Union, which in addition to providing significant financial resources have concluded generous trade arrangements. Jamaica's focus on China is not surprising, given that country's rapid level of economic growth and generosity with development assistance in Africa and the Caribbean. The Golding administration, in a bid to make good on its election mantra of "jobs, jobs, jobs," therefore is looking to cash in on some of the largesse of the Chinese in their pursuit of the natural resources required to fuel their expansion. The GOC already has agreed to revive one of Jamaica's old bauxite plants, and the GOJ is marketing deals in the coffee, energy, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. End comment.
Parnell